

Being Natural

Swami Suryadevananda

Fortunately, there is still a lot of natural beauty in different countries and it should be preserved. If we change everything, we will never know what being natural means.

You can only learn about being natural from what is natural and this includes untampered nature and people who are natural. Yoga is a return to our natural state – let the world take whatever design it may – why does that mean we have to lose our innate sense of naturalness with it?

Have you ever just sat by an old tree and looked at it closely? This is a very old tree in Japan 'Jomun Sugi' – you can imagine what it has seen and what secrets it knows. We face some trials and tribulations in our lives but can you imagine what all this majestic tree has faced?



“Jōmon Sugi is a large cryptomeria tree (yakusugi) located on Yakushima, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Japan. It is the oldest and largest among the old-growth cryptomeria trees on the island, and is estimated to be between 2,170 and 7,200 years old. Other estimates of the tree's age include “at least 5,000 years”, “more than 6,000 years”, and “up to 7,000 years old”. The tree's name is a reference to the Jōmon period of Japanese prehistory.” ([Read more here](#) – from Wikipedia)

Every tree, flower and bird on nature's sutra – expresses itself completely – being the best tree, flower or songbird it can be because there is no self-centeredness and therefore, selfishness in nature. Every blessed bird of nature's sutra does the very best it can every moment – nature's grandeur is a testimony of this vibrant celebration. We are part of nature – why do we hold back and assert 'our, my and mine' – which makes us stand outside the rich tapestry (as if it is possible in the first place) and become smaller? Outer expansion is inner contraction.

We must ask ourselves, “So far, have I been able to express myself – which is express every blessed ounce of talent and ability? What keeps me from doing so? The sun shines the best it can, the tree grows the best it can, the birds sing the best each can (even crows) – why can I not sing kirtan best I can? Why do I say, “I do not have a good voice?” – this is ego centric behavior. When have I been able to do an asana, just once asana completely as if it would be the last thing I could offer to this beautiful creation to say, “Have not been able to be like you so far but now, this asana is the best I can do”. The same goes for all practices. They are designed so we can see

the hidden blockages and continue to 'do' in spite of them till we see the blockages as something outside us and rid ourselves of them as a snake sheds its slough.

It is not important how much expertise you have or how well you do any practice including asanas, kirtan, prayers and meditation – what is important is how 'the you' improves and is naturally reflected in life because of these practices.

When you return to nature – and we must return often – we see every blessed form of life and what we consider inanimate – all expressing themselves fully and therefore happy, joyful and as one because they have this in common. You cannot count 'expressing yourself' if there is a stick or carrot – any incentive – involved. That is not expression – it is business and the only problem with business is the center alphabets: *bu-sin-ess*. What in nature needs an incentive or disincentive? The sun shines because it is its nature, the tree grows majestically because it is its nature, the plants grow so well to nourish us because it is their nature – everything expressed is given. What have we been able to do in this way? That is yoga – standing with all, doing what needs to be done because it needs to be done with the fullest expression we can give – as an integral part of all. What have we been able to do in this way?

Have you seen how trees grow? The length away from the trunk at which they extend their branches – can we do an asana like that and hold? We can if we stand together with all as then, the force of the universe flows through our beings for its own joy. The force of nature has kept this majestic tree alive and growing for all these years – why do we think we would not be taken care of in the same way? We will have to work just like the tree but there will be no fear as 'that which fears' would not be. This is the focus of yoga – to cleanse so that one's true nature can be seen. This yoga or union already exists – it is not a state to come upon but there are impediments which must be removed each moment and so the practice of yoga is to do anything, all things and everything in such a way that action or our response to things does not start from thought or conditioning and does not end in either strengthening existing conditioning or making new conditioning – yoga calls these *vrittis*. Then, the *chitta* reflects *chitta* within itself and this undivided reflection is called *chittam*, undivided mind or pure consciousness.

Every action has to have total value – which means value in itself – not doing this for that or as a step towards this. If we can do anything with all our being: sweeping, cleaning, folding laundry or the spiritual practices with all our being – to express ourselves fully through it – we will find a way for action that is free of ego's interference and soon, we will find a way to live that is free of the ego and grand – glorious – joyful and a celebration in every moment. We will discover that the ordinary scintillates with the extraordinary as 'ordinariness' was an ordinary vision of things – a limited way of looking at the unlimited.

suryadevananda.org